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Articulating marxism, silencing liberalism: power and ideology in translating Ibsen in Iran

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Abstract

Based on Critical Discourse Analysis and with a particular emphasis on van Dijk's social-cognitive model (van Dijk 1988, 1995, 1998a, 1998b), this article investigates the effect of Marxist tendencies of a translator in the translation of a drama. The article argues that the translator's modulations lead to the polarization of us (Marxism) versus them (Liberalism) by his (dis)approval of the ideological content of the original drama. As a Marxist activist, the article argues, Amir Hossein Aryanpor, the translator of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* has used translation as a tool to silence Liberalism and most of its relevant values.

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1. Introduction

Translation as a rewriting process cannot take place in an ideal neutral situation; rather, certain ideological factors influence the original meanings. It can be a pitched battlefield in which a translator can “smuggle” his/ her ideology “to discuss, and to educate people in an indirect, oblique, and casual manner” (Farrell, 1942, Third section, para 3). Not being a trusted and faithful process, translation involves intentional or unintentional changes. A translator is constantly controlled by his/her ideology which manages content transfer to desired outcomes.

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Drama translation, as a subsection of literary translation, has specific importance among other types of literary translation as an unfinished ‘product’ which has to be completed when performed on the stage. Due to the combination of these two factors, while any form of ‘artistic’ text presents challenges in translation, a drama is perhaps the most complex one because the translated text may also be ‘redirected’ by the dramaturgical measures of the director if, of course, the translator and the director happen to be different.

A short glance at translation studies in Iran shows that the level, depth, and methodical standards of these studies have drastically improved lately. This movement in Translation Studies has increasingly grown over the past decades providing appropriate grounds for further research both in theory and practice of translation in Iran. This new emphasis in translation studies has come to also focus on the act of translation as the site of struggle for dis/possessing power and ideology. Yet, the related literature in Iran shows that most of works on the role of ideology in translation have been done in the field of media and news translation and also some studies on literary translation in the field of poetry, the novel, and the short story. However, research on the role of ideology in drama translation has remained scanty.

Notable exceptions in this area in Iran are Ghaderi’s studies on drama, dramaturgy and translation studies. For instance, in his article (2010), Ghaderi argues that the Persian translation/adaptation of two instances of Ibsen dramas in Iran show the inevitable stamps of ideology, of culture and of the historical moment of the new production. One instance which he discusses is the adaptation of – *An Enemy of the People* done for performance in 1969 by Said Soltanpour (1940-1982) and the other his own translation of *Peer Gynt* (2004).

Furthering Ghaderi’s line of argument and applying critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework with a particular emphasis on van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach (van Dijk 1988; 1995; 1998a; 1998b), the present study tries to explore the ideological polarizations of us (Marxism) and them (Liberalism) in an English-Persian drama translation context.

2. Theoretical Framework

According to van Dijk (1998c), “critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a field that is concerned with studying and analyzing written and spoken texts to reveal the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality and bias” (Khanjan et.al, 2013, p. 93). CDA can examine how these discursive sources are maintained and reproduced within specific social, political and historical contexts.

The significance of van Dijk’s (1988) framework for the analyses of news discourse is “his call for a thorough analysis not only of the textual and structural level of media discourse but also for analysis and explanations at the production and “reception” or comprehension level” (Boyd-Barrett, 1994 as cited in Sheyholislami, 2001, p.19).

For Van Dijk discourse analysis is essentially ideology analysis as he asserts, “Ideologies are typically, though not exclusively, expressed and reproduced in discourse and communication, including non-verbal semiotic messages, such as pictures, photographs and movies” (p. 17). He defines social cognition as “the system of mental representations and processes of *group members*” (van Dijk, 1998 as cited in Sheyholislami, 2001, p.22; my emphasis). In this regard, for Van Dijk, “ideologies [...] are the overall, abstract mental systems that organize [...] socially shared attitudes” (p. 18). Therefore, ideologies “indirectly influence the personal cognition of group members” in their act of comprehension of discourse among other actions and interactions (p. 19). According to van Dijk, mental representations “are often articulated along “Us” versus “Them” dimensions, in which speakers of one group will generally tend to present themselves or their own group in positive terms, and other groups in negative terms” (p22). Van Dijk believes that one who wants to uncover such an ideological dichotomy in discourse needs to investigate discourse in the following way (1998b, pp. 61-63):

- a) Examining the context of the discourse: historical, political or social background of conflict and its main participants
- b) Analyzing groups, power relations and conflicts involved
- c) Identifying positive and negative opinions about Us versus Them
- d) Making explicit the presupposed and the implied
- e) Examining all formal structures: lexical choice and syntactic structure, in a way that helps to (de)emphasize polarized group opinions.

The strategy of polarization - positive in-group description and negative out-group description – (Van Dijk, 1998b), has the following abstract evaluative structure, which he calls the 'ideological square':

1. Emphasize our good properties/actions
2. Emphasize their bad properties/actions
3. Mitigate our bad properties/actions
4. Mitigate their good properties/actions.

Table 1. Van Dijk's Ideological Square: Polarization of Us and Them".

	Us	Them
Emphasize	Positive dimension	Negative dimension
Mitigate	Negative dimension	Positive dimension

3. Method and Data Analysis

This study investigates the ways in which a translator by his own ideological principles tries to silence the ideology and values of a group which he finds in conflict with his own value system. To illustrate this, some selected sentences from two different English translations of Henrik Ibsen's *An Enemy of the People* along with their Persian translation are analyzed using van Dijk's CDA model. It is noteworthy to say that the translator of this drama was a Marxist activist the act of translation of the play occurred in the 1950s, that is, after the US-backed *coups d'état*.

Based on the major trend in CDA, this article adopts a purely qualitative analysis approach. As critical discourse analysis typically tends to focus on pre-existing variables, a self-selection approach in data collection has been followed in this research. This self-selection has been inspired by the inherent nature of retrospective researches whereby the present and pre-occurred variables are to be studied (Delavar, 1999, p. 393). According to Aryanpour (1925-2001), the translator, this translation has been done on the bases of two English translations, one by R. Fraquhorson Sharp and the other, by Eleanor Marx Aveling. So the materials are: (1) an English translation of *An Enemy of the People* by Farquharson Sharp (2) another English translation of this drama by Eleanor Marx with the same title and (3) a Persian translation of the same text entitled دشمن مردم ("The Enemy of the People") by Amir Houssein Aryanpour. To increase reliability and validity of the research, each of the Persian sentences has been compared with its both English translations and only those sentences have been selected which are in full agreement with both English texts. Yet, due to the lack of space, only the English translations by R. Fraquhorson Sharp has been brought in the Analysis of Sample Data.

4. Analysis of Sample Data

The analysis will consider five possible sentences – out of many cases – for discussion separately. Discussions and conclusions for each sample have been drawn separately. Following van Dijk's ideological square. Also, since Aryanpour, the translator, was a Marxist, political activist, in this research "US" has been considered as Marxism and "THEM" as Liberalism. The summary of the drama comes first and then this will be followed by analyzing the data.

4.1. "An Enemy of the People" and Its Persian Translator

"An Enemy of the People" is about a scientist, Dr. Stockmann, who discovers the contamination of the bath system, the only source of income in the city. At first, some journalists and press support him to inform the people, but his brother, the mayor of the city, can convince others to oppose him. At the end, while deciding to defy authority, Dr. Stockmann says that the strongest man is the man who stands alone.

"*An Enemy of the People*" was one of the first plays by Ibsen which was performed and has always attracted the attention of Iranian audience. Ghaderi (2006) states, "Among Ibsen's dramas *An Enemy of the People* has, by far, had the most readers and the most audiences both in television and in theatre in Iran" (p.79). Amir Hossein Aryanpour (1925-2001) "[a] thorn in the flesh of the Shah, the Islamists, and even some of the intelligentsia, whom he criticised for their shallowness" (Baqer Mo'in as stated in Ghaderi, 2010, p.209) and a "leftwing sociologist in favor of secularism and social sciences" (ibid, p.210) translated this drama into Persian for the first time in 1959.

4.2. Samples

The first sample has been extracted from Act. III while Petra, Dr. Stockmann's daughter, and Hovstad are speaking with each other. Petra had agreed to translate an English story for the paper, but now she refuses. She believes that the content of the story conflicts with the paper's opinions. Hovstad replies that he thought the piece would be good as that is just what their readers want. He is trying to persuade Petra that it is necessary for a newspaperman to play the political game in order to survive.

1) Hovstad. *Politics are the most important thing in life—for a newspaper, anyway* : (p.50)

Persian Translation: تنها چیزی که برای روزنامه نویس اهمیت دارد مسائل سیاسی است

(Back Translation: *Political issues are the only important things, at least for a journalist.*)

Toudeh or People's party, one of the active Marxist parties before the 1979 revolution in Iran, paid special attention to the task of its members and their writings. The significant event, the Shah's Assassination in February 1949, cast a long shadow on Toudeh Party. The Government had gathered enough support to denounce the party and proclaimed all activities by it as illegal all through the country. Thus, Toudeh Party was forced to go underground and conduct most of its activities through intellectuals. "It had organized its supporters under the banner of the Iran Society for Peace (Jam'iyat-e Irani-ye Havadar-e Solh) and was publishing three daily papers, Razm (Battle), Mardom (people), and Besui-ye Ayandeh (Toward to the Future)" (Gasiorowski & Byrne, 2004, p.103). In essence, through the power of "Pen" and lectures of intellectuals, they sought to affect people's minds. It seems using the specialized word "a journalist" instead of "a newspaper", a strategy already labeled "Personalization" by Van leuveen, may well be regarded a case of emphasis on this particular issue at that time. Van leuveen(2008) discusses, "Personalization is another important factor in representation of the social actors when representational choices personalize social actors, represent them as human beings, as realized by personal or possessive pronouns, proper names, or nouns [...] whose meaning includes the feature 'human'" (2008, p.35).

Basically, the goal of translation here is to make salience "our" positive actions of the party, Marxism. To achieve this goal, another manipulation strategy has been employed by Aryanpour. At first glance, the addition of the word "تنها, only" does not make an idea different from the idea available in the source text. But if we pay more attention, the modal adverb "only" has possibly been used to overemphasize on the ideology of the translator. Does not a journalist have other jobs or responsibilities in his life? Using the word "only" shows that political issues are regarded as the only things in the life of a member of the Party even more important than their family, their livelihood, etc. Other things are inferior to writing (Emphasis on our good properties/actions).

The Next sentence is from Act V at the end of the play when the doctor's sons arrive, having been sent home because they got into a battle. The doctor decides that he will set up a school for poor children.

2) Morten. *And what are we going to do, when you have made liberal-minded and high-minded men of us?* (p.98)

Persian Translation: والتز. بابا، وقتی که ما آن طوری که شما می خواهید بزرگ شدیم ، آن وقت چه باید بکنیم؟

(Back Translation: *what are we going to do, when you have made men of us as you want?*)

As you can see, Aryanpour has omitted the adjective "liberal minded" in his translation. This omission or drop could not have been done recklessly. Just as other examples in this translation, he has omitted the word "Liberal" whenever it follows or proceeds by positive and good adjectives or properties (mitigating "THEIR" good properties). Aryanpour has dropped the word "liberal" in his translation as it is followed by another positive phrase "high-minded" not to show this positive property of liberals. Apart from the immediate distortion of the source text reality, this ideological policy contributes to creating new linguistic expressions that bear much relation

to the translator's ideology. So the strategy of polarization has easily been realized by mitigating and de-emphasizing "THEIR" (liberal) good properties/actions.

The same issue can be seen in the next sentence. The setting of the following sentence is in Dr. Stockmann's study room in Act. V. His landlord sends a letter that they have to move out. The doctor does not care because he is taking his family to the New World on Horster's next boat. Mrs. Stockmann asks him if they should move to another town in Norway, but the doctor answers that the people will be the same even in the "free" west.

3) Dr. Stockmann. *The worst is that, from one end of this country to the other, every man is the slave of his Party. Although, as far as that goes, I daresay it is not much better in the free West either; the compact majority, and liberal public opinion, and all that infernal old bag of tricks are probably rampant there too. But there things are done on a larger scale, you see. They may kill you, but they won't put you to death by slow torture.* (p.82)

Persian Translation:

دکتر. این مهم است که در این کشور، از این سر تا این سر هر کس غلام یک حزب است. فرق نمی کند. دنیای "آزاد" غرب هم بهتر از این جا نیست. در آنجا هم جامعه اسیر اکثریت است. اسیر افکار سطحی عمومی و حقه بازیهای شیطانی است تنها با این تفاوت که در آنجا ممکن است آدم را بکشند، اما روح یک آزاد مرد را باشرارت خودشان شکنجه نمی دهند.

(Back Translation: *This is important, from one end of this country to the other, every man is the slave of a Party. There is no difference. it is not much better in the free West either. The society is affected by the compact majority there too. Shallow public opinion, and all that infernal old bag of tricks are probably rampant there too. But there things are done on a larger scale, you see. They may kill you, but they won't put you to death by slow torture.*)

Aryanpour has again omitted the phrase "liberal compact majority" in his translation. One more time, the text reads the compact majority as liberals. Such a position, reinforcing the acceptance of liberalism, threatens Marxism. Aryanpour has dropped the word "liberal" in his translation not to show this positive property of liberalism. On the other hand, by another lexical choice, again, he highlights this polarization. Translating "افکار سطحی عمومی", "superficial or shallow public opinion" instead of "liberal public opinion" can be another attempt being made here by him to the emphasis on "THEIR" bad properties. Thus, with one omission strategy as well as lexical manipulation, we have two dimensions of ideological square: Emphasizing "THEIR" bad properties as well as mitigating "THEIR" good properties.

Throughout the examples above, it can be shown that ideology plays a critical role in the direction and outcome of translation. The prominent omission of the word "liberal" is one of them that is so remarkable whenever it is followed or preceded by some acceptable and positive adjectives. More interestingly, this omission does not happen where the opposite is the case. Such fluctuations of the translator's policies justify that the translation process is bound by one important factor, namely, ideology.

The next example shows that the word "liberal" has not been ignored as Aryanpour strives to portray the "liberals" in a negative way:

4) Dr. Stockmann. *I only want to drum into the heads of these curs the fact that the liberals are the most insidious enemies of freedom—*(p.98)

Persian Translation: من میخواهم این حقیقت را در گوش مردم فرو کنم که این لیبرال ها مودی ترین دشمنان آزادی هستند

(Back Translation: *I want to drum into the heads of these curs the fact that these liberals are the most insidious enemies of freedom.*)

The next sentence is taken from Act III, set in the newspaper office. Dr. Stockmann enters and tells them about his argument with the mayor. The three (Billing, Hovstad, Aslaksen) are excited to "tear down" the current administration. The doctor is deeply moved by their support and encouragement.

5) Dr. Stockmann. *Well, they will get the worst of it with me; they may assure themselves of that. I shall consider the "People's Messenger" my sheet-anchor now.* (p.46)

Persian Translation: باشد تا روزی همین ها بیایند روی پای من بیاقتند! مطمئن باشید. از امروز بیک مردم سنگر من است.

(Back Translation: *Hope that one day these people request me pleadingly! Be sure about it. I shall consider the "People's Messenger" my trench now.*)

Having checked the meaning of word "sheet-anchor" in dictionaries like Longman and Oxford, it denotes such meanings as "A large extra anchor intended for use in an emergency, لنگر اضطراری" and in its metaphorical sense, it means "a person or thing to be relied upon in an emergency, پناه، مایه دلگرمی، تکیه گاه". Why

this choice should have been made by the translator? What interests are served, and what purposes are achieved by this manipulation? Translating this word to "سنگر", trench, barricade" can be a reference to the word "struggle" or even the (class) "war" (Emphasis on what has good properties/actions for US). The Marxist manifesto argues that the class struggles, or the exploitation of one class by another, are the motivating force behind all historical development (Marx and Engels, 1886). The authors also state that this struggle is an end to this process. Actually, a major social change is not possible without any war or struggle.

Although "Mohammad Reza Shah's return to power did not uproot political and religious groups (Haddadian Moghaddam, 2012, p.6), the CIA staged coup d'état in 1953 resulted in putting Tudeh Party in some case of inactivity and this was somehow the time of translation of the drama in question. Mirsepassi (2001) believes, "although over the years, the socialist movement has suffered serious setbacks and lost many of its cadre and leading intellectuals to prisons and firing squads, throughout the century and right up to the recent Revolution it managed to be a consistent social and political force" (2003, p.161). Under such circumstances, perhaps the translator wants to claim that the party is still active and alive in spite of undue downward political pressure. Thus, special lexical choice or, better to say, lexical manipulation has been made by him as an emphasis on "OUR" good properties.

The last sample is taken from Act. III. At this point of the play, the Doctor is totally idealistic about the goodwill and strength of the people while he worries about society.

6) Dr. Stockmann. *Truth and the People will win the fight, you may be certain! I see the whole of the broad-minded middle class marching like a victorious army--!* (p.60)

Persian Translation: به چشم می بینم که همه مردم آزاد و مستقل ، مانند ارتش فاتحی پیشروی می کنند

(Back Translation: *I see the all free independent people marching like a victorious army--!*)

Omitting the "middle class" is noticeable in the translation. It may be due to some reasons. The middle class and bourgeoisie are the ones with whom Marxists are in conflict. A Marxist wants to abolish the capitalist state, appropriate the means of production, elevate the working class as the ruling class, and if necessary, kill off any remaining bourgeoisie or capitalists who think to organize a counter-revolution. Another point deserving our attention is that the adjective for this class in the sentence is "broad-minded". This omission can be a case of mitigate "THEIR" positive properties.

5. Discussion

Generally, the CDA analysis of the text, through a careful sentence by sentence comparative/contrastive reading of the source full-texts and the Persian translation, reveals the discursive structures and translation strategies which are implicitly/explicitly deployed at the linguistic level of the text in terms of positive presentation of the in-group (Marxism) and the negative presentation of the out-group (liberalism). Actually, this presentation has been done through two levels: lexical level, the use of some biased words, certain concepts or ideologically-laden Marxist terms and syntactic level, deletion and omission.

Gentzler and Tymoczko (2002) in their book *Ttranslation and Power* suggest that it is time for a new turn in translation studies. They write "The key topic that has provided the impetus for the new directions that translation studies have taken since the cultural turn is power" (Gentzler & Tymoczko, 2002, p. xvi). These scholars also explain that the exploration of power is becoming much more important in translation studies. In translation, the exercise of power can be considered as enabling action for subversion and silencing of counter- ideology. Thus, in studying why "*An Enemy of the People*" has been translated in a certain way, we might have to consider the power relations inside the social and political situation in which its translator worked.

This power game was also mapped in Iran. The Shah's success in silencing political parties in opposition, Marxist party experienced a tough situation for their political activities. Can silencing really lead to silencing? Despite the harsh and heavy handed severities and criticisms by the government, it was the power of the "Pen" and that of writings which became a source of hope for the left and the anti-Shah groups to continue their struggle, ardent, yet hidden. So translation as a kind of writing is seen as a good situation since "what is unique to translation is that the exercise of power tends to be easier to play out" (Hatim & Munday, 2004, p.99). Inevitably, translators can find some techniques to speak through silencing and use translation to articulate their own ideas,

albeit “the agents of power” (Haim & Munday, 2004, p.93) like governments, publishers, editors and some other powerful institutions may control the translation process.

Besides, the translation of *An Enemy of the People* was not just a translation. Additionally, it was Aryanpour’s linguistic act of anti-liberalism. In the 1950s, a translator was the representative of a special worldview or better to say, their name was synonymous with a distinctive ideology. A translator did not operate as a benign translator, but as the flag of a specific belief. According to Ghaderi (2010), “Ibsen was first introduced to its Iranian readership through the dramatic activities of the left” (p.208). He goes on to say that “the translators/directors of Ibsen plays before the Revolution chose those works that best suited their political objectives” (ibid). *An Enemy of the People* was one of those dramas.

In the same article, “Transcreating Ibsen before and after the Islamic Revolution in Iran”, Ghaderi (2010) discusses that changes in original works “usually suggest that the adaptor/interpreter is keen to negotiate the work both with the author of the source text and the audience of his/her own culture” (p.201). Under the influence of some Marxist critics such as Plekhanov or Lunacharsky, Aryanpour “accused Ibsen of supporting bourgeois individualism” (ibid) and made some deliberate manipulations in his translation to negotiate both with Ibsen and the audiences.

The other point worth mentioning is that a simple statistical analysis indicates that ideologically-valued words like war, struggle, fight, revolution, ideology, society have been repeated 34 times throughout the source text, while their frequencies in the target text are 49. The reason which might lie behind this is highlighting Marxism properties by Aryanpour. Interestingly, on the other hand, the frequency of occurrence of the word “Liberal” in the translated text is less than that of the source texts; this word has been repeated 11 times in the source texts, while it is produced only 7 times in the target text. This result can support this idea that in the overall perspective drawn for Liberalism there is no brilliant image.

6. Conclusion

This article has tried to analyze the translation of a specific translator examining how this translation contributes to ideological (Marxism-Liberalism) polarization in the context of an English-Persian drama translation within Teun van Dijk’s socio-cognitive approach (1988; 1995; 1998a; 1998b). In the qualitative phase of the investigation, through a critical analysis of “*An Enemy of The People*” along with a critical reading of its Persian, a number of fragments were self-selected with the potential of underlying ideological lexical and syntactic treatments in their respective Persian translations. The data analysis as such revealed Aryanpour’s strategies employed in his translation – ranging from lexical choices and variations to particular purposeful syntactic choices, addition and deletion.

Certainly, the investigation of translation from the power perspective is significant in translation studies and draws more attention. In other words, ideology and power analysis provide a deeper and better understanding of the discursive practices which will help us to realize the power tensions and relations. In a struggle for power, translators can change the existing order, reframe understanding of a text in a particular manner and decode the messages purposefully. In addition, studying a translation from power point of view, one can find the answers why a translation occurs, what a translator does and what are the consequences of this translation since translation is not a haphazard activity, but rather, “a deliberate and conscious act of selection, assemblage, structuring, and fabrication – and even, in some cases, of falsification, refusal of information, counterfeiting, and the creation of secret codes” (Tymoczko & Gentzler, 2002, p. xxi).

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